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Source: *Modern Asian Studies*, 1973, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1973), pp. 253-275

Published by: Cambridge University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/311778>

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Urban Politics in the Local Kingdoms of India: A View from the Princely Capitals of Saurashtra under British Rule

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A SUBSTANTIAL body of literature argues persuasively that Indian towns were often founded by local political-military rulers to serve as fortress-headquarters. In order to enhance their personal prestige, improve the efficiency of their administration, and provide market facilities for their small kingdoms, the rulers later invited merchants, artisans, administrators, and professionals to the fortress capitals. These invited, non-landed groups then formed courts, markets, and temple establishments which were dependent on the ruler for protection in an often violent atmosphere. The headquarters towns have been seen as the geographical locus and political nexus, or hinge, at which village levels of polity were linked with regional or state levels of government in a predominantly agrarian society. The most explicit and sophisticated presentation of this 'hinge' view is in Richard Fox's 'Rajput "Clans" and Rurban Settlements in Northern India.'¹

The research for this study was carried out under grants from the United States National Science Foundation and the Danforth Foundation.

A preliminary version of this paper was delivered at the South Asia Regional Seminar of the University of Pennsylvania. Revision has profited from the suggestions made by the members of the Seminar.

¹ This general pattern of urban development and morphology has been traced for several regions of India at various time periods. Cf. Bernard S. Cohn, 'Political Systems in Eighteenth-century India: The Banaras Region,' *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. LXXXII, No. 3, pp. 312–20; Richard G. Fox, *From Zamindar to Ballot Box* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), especially pp. 270–1; Fox, 'Rajput "Clans" and Rurban Settlements in Northern India,' in Fox (ed.), *Urban India: Society, Space, and Image* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia, 1970), pp. 167–85; Burton Stein, 'Integration of the Agrarian Systems of South India,' in Robert Eric Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), pp. 175–216; K. N. Singh, 'The Territorial Basis of Medieval Town and Village in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, India,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. LVIII (1968), pp. 203–20; A. M. Shah, 'Political System in Eighteenth-century Gujarat,' *Enquiry* Vol. I, No. 1 (Spring 1964), p. 88.

This view of the town as political hinge is especially attractive, for it also merges conceptually with the geographer's model of a national, integrated hierarchy of cities. This model postulates a small number of multifunctional metropolises; a greater number of provincial cities serving the requirements of smaller, yet substantial sub-regions; and a large number of local towns performing only a few economic and political functions.² The view of the town as hinge also fits well with the urban and regional planners' concept of cities as integrating nodes for regions: if cities are appropriately spaced throughout a region, political and economic integration is stimulated, and national solidarity and economic development promoted.³

One problem which follows from this analysis of the city as an integrating hinge is the failure of India, at most times in her history, to achieve either national political integration or rapid economic development. Some scholars have argued that part of the problem is an insufficiency of towns, a lack of hinges.⁴ Of course, to presume that the urban system alone can explain national integration, or the lack of it, is to attempt to explain too much: the urban system is only one factor in national development. Nevertheless, a fuller examination of headquarters towns in India suggests that they have in fact impeded integration and economic growth at least as much as they have fostered these goals.

Two elements in the structure of headquarters towns impeded regional and market integration. First, within the headquarters town, the military ruler and the professional and business classes—particularly those with wide-ranging contacts—often battled with one another.⁵ The goal of the ruler, which was usually to maximize political control over his subjects, conflicted with the goals of the merchants and professionals, which were to make profits and to exercise skills and talents. The ruler usually did not want the town market and court to be independent entities. He wanted them subject to his will.⁶ Often, too,

² Cf. Brian J. L. Berry, *Geography of Market Centers and Retail Distribution* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967).

³ Cf. Lloyd Rodwin, *Nations and Cities* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970).

⁴ Brian J. L. Berry, 'Policy Implications of an Urban Location Model for the Kanpur Region,' in P. B. Desai, I. M. Grossack, and K. N. Sharma (eds), *Regional Perspective of Industrial and Urban Growth: The Case of Kanpur* (Bombay: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 203-19; E. A. J. Johnson, *Market Towns and Spatial Development in India* (New Delhi: National Council of Applied Economic Research, 1965).

⁵ Cf. Max Weber, *The Religions of India* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press of Glencoe, 1958), pp. 86-92, 127-9; also Weber, *The City* (New York: The Free Press, 1958), pp. 81, 84.

⁶ Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

he scorned trade as unworthy of attention.⁷ In the context of military and political instability, the military authority usually won, for it provided the protection which was indispensable to the life of the settlement.

Towns in India impeded political and economic integration in a second way. The towns, which may have served as hinges vertically linking higher and lower levels of polity, nevertheless served as military headquarters for antagonistic relations with neighboring towns, so to speak, horizontally. Frequently, towns were militantly hostile to one another. This hostility could have led to creative competition, but at least as often it resulted in warfare. Persistent war and the threat of war inhibited regional political and market integration.⁸

These two tensions frequently marked the urban system in pre-Independence India: tension between the landholding town rulers and the non-landed merchant and professional classes; and tension between neighboring towns which served as headquarters for local, often militantly antagonistic rajas. For India generally I can at this point only assert this theoretically. For the Saurashtra (Kathiawar) peninsula in the century immediately before the British arrival in 1807-08, the materials I have examined firmly substantiate this interpretation.

When the British began to dominate the Saurashtra region politically, they found 162 fortified settlements in its 25,000 square miles. Defensive citadels were sown broadcast over the countryside. Wars, or at least skirmishes, among the military rulers headquartered in these fortresses were common. Trade between kingdoms was minimal.⁹ The major ruling families were also divided by diverse cultural ties: the Babi rulers of Junagadh, successors within Saurashtra of the Sultanate of Gujarat and the Mughal Empire, oriented toward opulent Muslim manners and mores; Nawanagar, scion of the Jadeja Rajputs of Kutch, valued aggressive military policies; while the Gohel Rajput rulers of

⁷ James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. I (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd, 1914), p. 394.

⁸ Why did not peaceful accommodation result? Weber argues that the *dharma* or ethic of the Kshatriya warrior-rulers was to fight and they observed their *dharma*. Weber, *The Religion of India*. Fox writes that competition for land led to warfare, but kinship and marriage prescriptions promoted harmony. The result, implicitly, was alternating peace and war. Fox, *Kin, Clan, Raja, and Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

⁹ 'Owing to the number of separate jurisdictions into which the peninsula is split up, the head of each exercising the right of imposing customs and other imposts *ad libidum*, there is very little internal trade in Kathiawad and consequently there are no exchange operations carried on between Rajkot and Wadhwan and the other commercial towns worth noting.' National Archives of India. Western India States Agency File. 1864, Vol. 5, No. 57 'Banks.'

Bhavnagar had early concentrated on commercial development to exploit the potentials of the trade-rich Gulf of Cambay on which it was situated. These three rajadoms had substantial size, controlling from 600 to 900 villages each; another five rulers held from 100 to 200 villages; and about 200 rulers held smaller estates, some as tiny as one or two villages. Further, within the ruling families, antagonism was common, often leading to attempts to form splinter states through internal military revolt. The politically and culturally fragmented peninsula had no unifying urban hierarchy.

Struggles within the town walls between military rulers, usually Rajputs, and the merchants and professionals are copiously documented both in Indian and British sources.¹⁰ Some rulers, valuing the profits of trade, did invite merchants and attend to the demands of the *mahajans*, a kind of merchant lobby.¹¹ But other rulers might expel the merchants or confiscate their property. Advisors and government servants came and went as princely policies changed. The rulers were tied to their land and capital city, for these were the bases of their power. The merchants and professionals, however, saw geographical mobility as their main lever of power. They bargained with the prince, threatening to desert and take their capital and skills with them if their demands were not met. Often they did leave, either by choice or forced out by coercion. Loyalty to the state did not often develop.¹²

The present paper briefly examines the effects of British and princely rule on the urban system of Saurashtra, particularly in the light of the two-fold tensions which had characterized the system. The time period is from 1863, the year from which the British adopted an active, interventionist policy in Saurashtra, until Independence in 1947.

British and princely policies

The British chose to rule Saurashtra indirectly through local 'princes' or landed warriors. In making the political and revenue settlement in

¹⁰ Cf. Ranchodji Amarji, *Tarikh-i-Sorath* (Bombay: Education Society's Press, 1882).

¹¹ Bhavnagar in particular fostered trade. See J. W. Watson, *Statistical Account of Bhavnagar* (Bombay: Education Society's Press, 1884).

¹² A ready example appears in the opening two paragraphs of Gandhi's *Autobiography* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957). Both Gandhi's father and grandfather served as prime ministers in Kathiawad States, and both moved at least once from one state to another, sometimes being forced out, sometimes choosing to move. The evident fact that Gandhi's grandfather did develop a sense of loyalty to the first state he served, even though he was forced out, is presented as an unusual phenomenon.

1807-08, Colonel Alexander Walker recognized some 250 distinct local jurisdictions in Saurashtra, including those few which were substantial in terms of population, area, and revenue. He designated the ruler in each as responsible for administering justice and paying the revenue.¹³ In accordance with the British pattern of indirect princely rule, the rulers were promised protection by the British from both insurrection and invasion. Previously, princes had had to bargain at least occasionally with various other groups in their domains: courtiers, administrators, merchants, younger branches of the family, mercenaries, and tenants. British support and protection enabled the princes to ignore these groups. The princes drew increasingly more aloof from their subjects.

TABLE I
Years of minority administration

State	Years	Total years
Junagadh	1911-20	9
Jamnagar	1896-1903	7
Bhavnagar	1870-78 (8)	
	1919-31 (12)	20

Source of data: Annual Administration Reports of each State. Available in India Office Library. Western India States Agency File.

The British style of rule strongly influenced the princes. The British built a new enclave, the Rajkot Civil Station, as headquarters for the Saurashtra administration. They economized on administration by ignoring economic development and by limiting the number of paid administrators; the latter goal was a major justification for co-opting the princes into the administration. The British urged similar patterns of enclave development, bureaucracy, and inexpensive administration on the princes as well. During the not infrequent periods when the successor to a *gadi* was yet a minor when the ruler died, the British took over direct administration of the princely State (Table 1). They then impressed their policies on the State directly and charged the cost to the State's budget. The British also built a special school, the Raj Kumar College, for the sons of princes. Here the curriculum and the ranking instructors provided British-certified education and indoctrination.

¹³ The Walker Settlement is presented in detail in Bombay Presidency. *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. XXXIX (NS), Pt I (Bombay, 1856).

TABLE 2
Population of leading cities of Jannagar State 1872-1951

	1872	1901	1921	1931	1941	1951	Percentage increase from 1872
1. Jannagar	34,744	53,844	42,495	55,056	71,588	104,419	226
2. Khambaliya	9,067	9,182	8,911	10,913	12,190	15,194	68
3. Jodiya	6,592	7,321	5,758	6,780	8,956	13,798	—
4.				Bhanwad 6,485	8,378	11,819	—
5.				Jam Jodhpur 5,899	7,248	8,238	19

TABLE 3
Population of leading cities of Bhavnagar State 1872-1951

	1872	1901	1921	1931	1941	1951	Percentage increase from 1872
1. Bhavnagar	35,871	56,442	59,392	75,594	102,851	137,951	285
2. Mahuva	13,457	17,547	16,232	19,019	22,058	26,718	100
3. Sihor	10,028	10,101	9,815	12,915	Kundla	22,413	326
4. Botad	7,420	8,857	8,705	10,049	Botad	19,558	164
5. Kundla	5,274	6,125	6,167	7,263	Sihor	13,569	36
6. Savar							
Sawapadar	4,994	Gadhada	5,240	6,379	Rajula	9,637	—
7.		Rajula	4,929	6,173	Gadhada	8,345	—
8.		S.S.	4,812	5,536			

TABLE 4
Population of leading cities of Junagadh State 1872-1951

	1872	1901	1921	1931	1941	1951	Percentage increase from 1872
1. Junagadh	20,025	34,251	33,221	39,890	58,111	62,730	224
2. Mangrol	15,341	Veraval	19,365	21,114	30,275	40,378	266
3. Veraval	10,735	Mangrol	14,233	16,063	Kutiyana	20,085	31
4. Kutiyana	9,878	10,287	12,332	14,707	Mangrol	12,790	111
5. Una	7,056	Patan	8,639	9,837	11,613	Kutiyana	27
6. Patan	6,856	Wanthli	8,427	9,065	11,377	12,056	76
7. Wanthli	6,056	Una	6,435	7,732	9,847	11,640	65

The princes learned to emulate the British model. Even previously they had built elaborate capital cities;¹⁴ now they lavished added attention on them. Capital cities grew at a much faster rate than the other cities of the States, reflecting the enclave philosophy of development. Compare the growth rates in the three largest States, presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4. (Junagadh is a less decisive case. The capital city was inland and the development of Veraval Port formed a second focus of growth.)

TABLE 5
Municipal expenditures

Year	Bhavnagar City (Rs)	Other cities in Bhavnagar State (Total of 9) (Rs)
1909-10	65,117	28,266
1914-15	71,970	31,228
1919-20	77,574	34,585
1924-25	112,672	46,587
1929-30	114,301	62,236
1934-35	225,983	98,537
1939-40	153,842	75,050
1943-44	184,989	107,226

Year	Junagadh City (Rs)	Other cities in Junagadh State (15 in 1908-09; 17 thereafter) (Rs)
1908-09	21,896	10,589
1913-14	41,422	25,568
1918-19	56,129	42,641
1923-24	69,897	66,033
1927-28	72,349	65,336

Source of data: Annual Administration Reports of the States.

The town planning schemes, designed for the capital cities alone, graphically and spectacularly reflect this concentration. Jamnagar, for example, attempted to build a 'Paris of Saurashtra.' The ruler tore down slums at the center of the city and replaced them with new government offices and private shops. He cut wide roads through densely populated communities, destroying homes and businesses as he went. These new roads were open only to motor traffic; they were closed to the bullock-cart transportation customary in Saurashtra. Spacious new suburban subdivisions were planned. Some were built, but most remain

¹⁴ Cf. Alexander Kinloch Forbes, *Ras Mala*, Vol. I (London: Humphrey Milford, 1924), pp. 436-8 on the founding of Bhavnagar.

until today as unexecuted blueprints in the Jamnagar Municipality Planning Office. Even on the day-to-day administration of their capitals, rulers spent disproportionate amounts as compared with expenditures for other cities. Compare the data available for Bhavnagar and Junagadh States as shown in Table 5. The construction of such grandiose enclaves drew much opposition from professionals and business people.¹⁵

The princes, propped up by the British and ensconced in their capitals, could afford to pamper themselves and neglect the remainder of the population. Many of the groups with whom they had had to negotiate in pre-British times were now subordinated to them. The British had disbanded the mercenary armies and checked the threats of armed outlawry and revolt from within the State. So, too, British power ended the threat of attack from enemy rulers.¹⁶ Protected from enemies within and without, the princes were less vulnerable to pressure from their subjects.

Conversely some aspects of British policy, and of princely policy as well, did strengthen the merchant and professional classes. The British presence strikingly increased the opportunities in commerce, especially in cotton export. Note the rapid expansion in the sea trade of the peninsula (Table 6).

The British introduced standard weights, measures, and currency in Saurashtra. Several states had operated their own mints and the British now closed them: Bhavnagar's in 1839, Jamnagar's in 1901, and Junagadh's in 1911.¹⁷ Saurashtra accepted the common rupee currency of British India.

New transportation and communication systems were constructed. The British had the princes finance a trunk-road system under British jurisdiction and administration. The princes themselves undertook the construction of a railway system. The growth of the railway network is presented in Tables 7 and 8.

By removing the Viramgam Customs Cordon in 1917, the British allowed Saurashtra ports to offer tariff concessions which undercut the cost of importing at British ports. During the years when this was possible, 1917-27, the major coastal States invested large sums in port development: Jamnagar, which heretofore had few port facilities, spent

¹⁵ *Nawanagar State and Its Critics* (Bombay: *Times of India* Press, 1929).

¹⁶ H. Wilberforce-Bell, *The History of Kathiawad* (London: William Heinemann, 1916).

¹⁷ See Watson, *op. cit.*, and Annual Administration Reports for Jamnagar and Junagadh.

TABLE 6
Total sea trade in rupee value

Year	Part of Bhavnagar City only (Rs)	Jamnagar State ports (Rs)	Junagadh State ports (Rs)
1799-1800	3,590,880		
1844		546,000	
1845-46	363,436*		
1864		5,674,725	
1868			7,678,349
1869			6,619,026
1870			8,697,579
1871			7,051,333
1872			7,717,662
1873-74	17,189,664	6,174,381	
1874-75	15,986,110		
1875-76	16,405,822		
1876-77	16,820,009		
1878-79	12,674,438	3,568,894	
1879-80	16,732,103	3,908,340	
1880-81	18,419,452	4,144,657	
1881-82	21,122,231	3,941,269	
1882-83		4,044,522	
	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black;"> All Bhavnagar State ports Bhavnagar City port </div>		
1909-10	27,208,040	22,201,718	6,325,131
1914-15	38,870,662	29,811,384	9,599,470
1919-20	33,009,672	24,519,352	11,952,591
1924-25	53,297,849	44,642,815	15,212,201
1929-30	41,690,329	35,839,662	37,775,976
1934-35	74,466,765	69,346,831	22,186,080
1939-40	33,097,629	27,015,540	38,319,873
1943-44	37,745,912	32,088,846	46,504,127

* This sharp decline appears to be a result of sharply increased competition from the neighbouring British-held port of Gogha. Cf. *Ahmedabad Gazetteer*, p. 343.

TABLE 7
Miles of railway

Year	Miles of railway
1880	105
1890	426
1900	548
1910	584
1920	843
1930	1,006
1940	1,084

Sources of data: A. B. Trivedi, *Kathiawar Economics* (Bombay, 1943), pp. 192-5 for 1880-1936; and C. N. Vakil, *et al.*, *Economic Survey of Saurashtra* (Bombay: School of Economics and Sociology, University of Bombay, 1953), p. 318 for 1940.

TABLE 8
Rail freight

Year	Total freight tonnage carried by rail
1888	109,309
1890	128,966
1910-11	136,133
1914-15	678,300
1917-18	799,765
1919-20	922,193
1920-21	896,724
1921-22	928,465

Sources of data: National Archives of India. Western India States Agency File: for 1888-90, Volume 43 # 133 'Railways' of 1890; for 1918-22, Annual Administration Reports of the Kathiawar Political Agency.

Rs 16.6 million; Junagadh, Rs 5.9 million; Bhavnagar, Rs 4 million. Table 6 above records the increases in trade facilitated by these investments, notably in Jamnagar.

After 1921 especially, the princes also began to encourage industrial development. In 1921 the three major states combined had fewer than 4,500 workers in industry; Table 9 indicates the growth of industry by

TABLE 9
Industries in cities

I. Based on data in C. N. Vakil, <i>et al.</i> , <i>Economic Survey of Saurashtra</i> (1949).		
City	Number of factories	Number of workers
Bhavnagar	113	10,282
Jamnagar	98	5,514
Junagadh	n.a.	n.a.
II. Based on Government of Saurashtra. Department of Industries and Commerce. <i>Industries of Saurashtra</i> (1950).		
City	Number of workers	
Bhavnagar	9,500	
Vartej	500	
Dhola	500	
Botad	500	
Jamnagar	6,500	
Padadhari	500	
Junagadh	500	
Veraval	1,000	
Keshod	1,000	
Manavadar	500	
Porbandar	4,500	
Morvi	4,000	
Rajkot	2,500	
Dhrangadhra	1,000	
Gondal	1,000	
Dhoraji	500	

Independence. Bhavnagar City alone had some 10,000 industrial workers. The three States together had about 21,000. Opportunities for business and professional people expanded with the economy. The entrance of the princes into industrialization might suggest a *rapprochement* with the business community, but actually it often increased the friction because the princes usually supported development through restrictive monopolies.

Effects of British and princely policies

In the historical context of the urban structure of Saurashtra, British policy exacerbated tensions. It did eliminate battlefield warfare, but by offering new economic opportunities it indirectly encouraged the competition among city-states to relocate in the market place. The intensity of economic competition encouraged the persistence of regional fragmentation rather than integration. Further, by simultaneously promoting the interests of both the stationary, landed princes and the

TABLE 10
Percentage of revenue from land, customs and railroads

Year	Junagadh State			
	Land	Customs	Railways	Ports
1908-09	55	7.6	7.5	
1913-14	47	3.1	17	2.2
1918-19	36	2.9	27	5.5
1923-24	34	2.4	25	7.0
1928-29	40	4.3	22	9.2

Year	Jamnagar State			Bhavnagar State		
	Land	Customs	Railways	Land	Customs	Railways
1909-10	73	4.7	9.8	54	6	24
1914-15	70	3	8.3	56	7.4	27
1919-20	76	10	5	22	9.9	51
1924-25	46	29.8	13.5	28	21	32
1929-30	26	61	5.3	22	47	—
1934-35	28	58	4.5	10	57	16
1939-40	16	58	11.2	23	11	25
1943-44	43	17.6	19.8	24	6	43

Source of data: Annual Administration Reports.

mobile, non-landed merchant and professional classes, the British inflamed the tensions between the two groups. The two historic impediments to political and economic integration among the little kingdoms persisted.

The tension between the States increased with the mounting profits from the new trade and transport networks. Table 10 shows the growing importance of these new sources of income in the State budgets.

Some larger states, notably Bhavnagar and Gondal, adopted free

trade policies as conducive to their economic interests. But most princes chose to adopt restrictive trade policies. Their reasons were diverse and often contradictory: restrictive trade policies forced the use of state-owned transport systems; protected infant industries; increased tariff rates; maintained the importance and profits of local city markets instead of allowing subjects to trade more freely elsewhere; and maintained an internal food supply by restricting exports. More significant even than the economic rationales were the princes' fears that integration of their territories into wider trade networks would diminish their local political authority. Integration into larger co-operating units would highlight the relatively small size and minor importance of any one single state.¹⁸

Princes imposed customs barriers under one rubric or another.¹⁹ They sabotaged the trunk-road system by allowing bridges and roads to remain washed out and in general disrepair after the monsoon. They diverted commerce from the roads to the railways which they owned. The railway system, begun in 1880 in a spirit of harmony, broke up in acrimonious dispute when the profits proved worth fighting over. In 1911, the multi-state syndicate which controlled the Bhavnagar–Gondal–Junagadh–Porbandar Railway system broke apart into six separate units: the states could not agree on the most appropriate division of profits nor compromise their competitive interests in railway routings.²⁰ The bus transportation system which promised to develop in the 1920s was crippled by princely restrictions. 'Each state had its own separate road transport system unconnected with those of other states.'²¹

Most city-states seemed willing to act in protectionist ways against the others; the smaller states seemed most eager. They feared economic absorption. The ruler of Kotda Sangani, for example, feared that if he

¹⁸ The *karbharis*, or State representatives who met in annual sessions discussed the reluctance of rulers to part with any element of sovereignty. See, particularly, the discussions on the trunk-road system, Karbharis' Meeting. *A Manual of Karbharis' Meetings of Kathiawar States (1870 to 1940)* (Rajkot: under orders of Karbharis' Meeting, 1940), p. 439.

¹⁹ Officially, inter-state customs were outlawed by the British. Persistent reports show that the British policy was not successfully implemented. At the time of Independence, inter-state duties collected by all States combined were valued at Rs 45 lakhs. Government of Saurashtra, *Memorandum Presented by Government of Saurashtra to the Part B States (Special Assistance) Enquiry Committee, June 1953*, p. 21.

²⁰ The record of the dissolution of the BGJP railway syndicate unfolds in National Archives of India. Western India States Agency File for 1911, RY/2 and RY/3. 'The Breakup of the BGJP Railway.'

²¹ C. N. Vakil, D. T. Lakdawala, and M. B. Desai, *Economic Survey of Saurashtra* (Bombay: School of Economics and Sociology, University of Bombay, 1953), p. 323.

allowed free trade, his capital city would decline; his subjects would shift their trade to Gondal, eight miles to the west, or to Rajkot, fifteen miles to the north. Like most rulers of the smaller states of Saurashtra, he erected barriers to safeguard the importance of his home marketplace.²² The presence of multiple jurisdictions and headquarters towns in the peninsula multiplied the leverage of the smaller city-states at the expense of the larger. British policy conserved these small units and protected them from change.

By strengthening both the princes and the non-landed urban classes at the same time, the British increased the tensions within the capital cities as well as between them. As the opportunities for trade increased, pleasing the merchants, the princes imposed increasing restrictions on trade. The blockages in the inter-state transport system stung the merchants. The development of industries as state monopolies, or as state-supported monopolies, angered them still more. At first the monopolies boosted industrialization, but after a time they appeared restrictive. By the time of the Rajkot Satyagraha of 1939, for example, opposition to the prince of the Rajkot city-state included opposition to his state monopolies: the state bank, the state textile mill, and the state power-house. Merchants, in particular, withdrew their deposits from the bank, severed their electrical connexions, and refused to trade the mill's products.²³

The pettiness of state rulers frustrated the aspirations of promising professional and business people and drove them from the peninsula. Mahatma Gandhi's experience provides an early example. A native of Saurashtra, Gandhi attempted to found a legal practice in Rajkot in 1892 on his return from legal training in England. After a few months he left in despair, lamenting that 'the intriguing atmosphere of Kathiawad was choking.'²⁴

Over the years the tempo of emigration quickened. In 1911 the census reported that 6 per cent of the total Saurashtra-born population was resident in other parts of India; by 1931 the figure had risen to 10 per cent. More significantly, the emigrants were of the traditionally mobile high castes, particularly merchant castes, in the prime of their working

²² Subsequent events suggest that the ruler's fears were justified. After Independence and merger in 1947-48, the population of Kotda Sangani town dropped from 4,219 in 1951 to 4,194 in 1961 while the population of the district was rising about 30 per cent. The town was declassified as urban in the Census of 1961 and reclassified as rural.

²³ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *The Indian States' Problem* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1941).

²⁴ M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa* (Madras: S. Ganesan, 1928), p. 67.

TABLE II
Emigration from Kathiawad, 1911

I. Total emigrants—171,582; or 6 per cent of total population born in Saurashtra.		
II. Emigrants to the major cities of western India.		
City	Number of emigrants	Percentage of total emigrants from Saurashtra
Bombay	58,775	34
Karachi	14,728	9
Ahmedabad	8,335	5
Surat	3,394	2
Total (4 cities)	85,232	50
III. Partial caste distribution of <i>male</i> emigrants to Bombay, 1911. (Total male emigrants numbered 38,586, or 64 per cent of total emigrants.)		
Caste of emigrants	Number	Percentage of total male emigrants
A. Members of traditional trading communities	17,351	46
1. Hindu Vanias	6,344	
2. Jain Vanias	2,388	
3. Memons	2,365	
4. Lohanas	2,023	
5. Khojas	1,556	
6. Bohoras	1,415	
7. Bhatias	1,260	
B. Total Brahmins	4,152	11
IV. Partial distribution of male emigrants working in Bombay by occupation, 1911.		
Occupation	Number of male workers	Percentage of total
Total male workers	30,839*	100
Shopkeepers	10,940	35
Artisans	5,630	18
Clerks	2,675	9
Domestic servants	2,716	9
Laborers in textile mills	388	1
Other 'laborers'	859	3

Source of data for all tables: *Census of India 1911*, Vol. VIII, *Bombay Pt II*, pp. 199, 215.

* 80 per cent of total males.

years and occupied in business and the professions. Breakdown of the 1911 census data on emigration of Saurashtrians to Bombay City, the main destination, showed almost half of the emigrants as belonging to trader castes and 11 per cent more as Brahmins. On arrival at their destination, they continued to pursue careers in business and the professions (see Table 11). Further, Saurashtra showed only 28.9 per cent of its population in the prime working age of 20-40 while Bombay Presidency as a whole showed 32.9 per cent in 1931.

Emigration had always been a strategy open to the non-landed urbanites in Saurashtra at times of discontent, and the princes recognized its significance. The annual administration report for Jamnagar State noted in 1924-25: 'Unless we expand our trade and commerce, and widen the existing channels of our industry, apart from agriculture, the more enterprising members of our population will continue deserting us.' The emigrants were disaffected from both the princes and the British who preserved them. The Census of 1931 remarked on 'the well-known fact that the civil disobedience movement in several areas of the Bombay Presidency, and especially in Bombay City itself, was greatly favoured by the trading classes whose original home is in Kathiawar and Kutch.'²⁵

The struggle between the landed rulers in command of the cities and the non-landed urbanites came to a head by 1939 in the Rajkot Satyagraha. John Wood (in a recent Ph.D. dissertation) described the conflict:

Of lasting importance for the politics of Saurashtra was the fact that the Rajkot Satyagraha pitted not only the Gandhians against the prince, but also the non-violent urban castes against the martial and depressed castes of the rural areas. The leadership of the struggle was entirely in the hands of Brahmins and Banias.²⁶

Among the half-dozen top leaders in the pre-arranged chain of command were four Banias and two Brahmins.²⁷

The lines of class conflict within the city were clearly drawn. As the struggle intensified, the non-landed business and professional classes

²⁵ *Census of India 1931*, Vol. X, *Western India States Agency*, Pt I, p. 21.

²⁶ John R. Wood, 'The Political Integration of British and Princely Gujarat: The Historical-Political Variable in Indian State Politics' (New York City: unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, Faculty of Political Science, 1971), p. IV.:47. Wood is correct in seeing the martial and depressed castes as largely rural in composition, but their leaders were the urban-based Rajput rulers. Both martial Rajputs and 'non-violent' Brahmins and Banias had occupational and kin ties connecting urban and rural members of their groups.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. IV:60 n. 74.

attempted to swing the balance in their own favor by involving the rural population in political life. For the first time, it appeared that the postulated nexus between regional government and local people might finally be extended to the rural agricultural population.²⁸ As the anti-princely forces went to the countryside to organize the peasantry in opposition to the ruler, the princes responded in two ways. Some of them, some of the time, granted concessions to the peasants in the form of permanent occupancy rights, allowing the alienability of land, and enforcing laws against *corvée* labor. An alternate response, however, was the attempt to seal off the countryside from the urban organizers. In many states the urban classes were allowed to employ propaganda within the capitals, but were forbidden to carry their message to the countryside. Most dramatically, the Limbdi Satyagraha of 1938 resulted in violence and mass flight as the organizers refused to heed the prince's restrictions against rural organizing and were met with retaliation by armed force.²⁹

In trying to organize the countryside, the urban professional and business classes were attempting to spread their rising aspirations and ideology to a rural peasantry not yet so optimistic. The non-landed urbanites pressed for a redistribution of political and economic power, and for a new ethos of regional development in Saurashtra. They attempted to extend political activity both vertically downward by involving the peasantry, and horizontally in space by forging peninsula-wide political organizations.

Meanwhile, most princes thought that adequate progress was already being made. By building up their capital cities; by substantial investment in ports, railroads, and industries; and by administrative reform, the princes were moving from their earlier policy of the state as agricultural fief, to a new, as yet undefined, policy. And, in a process which is often overlooked, they did in fact create substantial urban, transport, and communication infrastructures which would serve the peninsula well after Independence and the merger of the jealous city-states. But, in the light of the demands being made, the princes moved too slowly. The expectations of the urban professional and business classes were rising quickly. They sought faster progress in a more open atmosphere,

²⁸ The theory of the town as hinge implies that people below the headquarters-town level were brought into the political process. In fact, however, their major form of participation was only the payment of revenue. This was especially true under Rajput rulers who considered themselves somewhat foreign to the area they controlled.

²⁹ The Limbdi Satyagraha as well as the overall progress of the anti-princely nationalist movement in Saurashtra is reported in M. K. Gandhi, *Indian States' Problem*.

either through emigration or political revolution. In the years immediately preceding Independence both of the antagonisms in the urban system had been rubbed raw. Mobile urbanites and landed princes confronted each other directly within the capital cities, and agitation for regional, horizontal integration directly opposed princely desires for territorial fragmentation into personal fiefs.

Summary and conclusions

The Saurashtrian fortress-town has served as a hinge for political communication vertically between higher and lower levels of political military authority. But in its relationship with other neighboring towns on the horizontal level, the fortress-town fragmented the local region. The warrior-rulers who founded and controlled the towns treated them more as headquarters for their bounded, landed holdings than as nodes in a wider system. To the extent that they were linked to wider networks, these networks divided their constituents, marking them as historic enemies and culturally separate entities. The headquarters towns were hubs of localism.

Internal examination of the social and political structure of the town showed an antipathy between the landed rulers who lived in and controlled the town, and the merchant and professional, non-landed classes who were their neighbors within the ramparts. The typical dominance of the former over the latter reinforced the town's role as the center of a personal landed fiefdom rather than as a node in a reciprocating inter-city trade network.

British rule heightened the two tensions inherent in the indigenous urban system. By protecting the princes and their domains, the British transferred the locus of inter-city competition from the battlefield to the marketplace. As opportunities for trade increased, competition took jealously isolationist forms in most of the states. In addition, British policies which strengthened both the merchant and professional classes on the one hand, and the princes on the other, increased the traditional conflict between these two urban groups. The princes saw that continued political control of their states required a substantial degree of encapsulation and isolation, while the professionals and the long-distance traders favored increased external contacts. By promoting a limited degree of economic modernization, British and princely policies first created, and then frustrated, a revolution of rising expectations.

Several caveats must hedge this argument. The generalizations here clearly do not fit all the city-states even within an area so small as Saurashtra. I have elsewhere³⁰ examined five city-states in some detail and have found obvious differences in policy. In addition, the categories of princes, professionals, and merchants are not adequately specific. At present I can only cite illustrative examples of each group and of their interactions, but I lack the data to reconstruct them comprehensively. The generalizations, however, do explain most of the cases and they do account for both the great territorial fragmentation and the incipient class conflict within the cities of the peninsula.

How comparable is Saurashtra to other areas of India? In many respects Saurashtra's experience is remarkably unique. Its peninsular position and long coast line; historic overseas trade contacts; remoteness from mainland political centers; highly favorable man-land ratio; tiny localized states; and the investment of these states with semi-autonomous political authority under British paramountcy—all these combine to form an unusual and distinct history. But despite these peculiar circumstances, the urban patterns of Saurashtra's little kingdoms show significant similarities with other regions of India.

They show strong similarities with little kingdoms in other Rajput territories as analyzed by Bernard Cohn and Richard Fox in Eastern Uttar Pradesh,³¹ with pre-British Bengal as delineated by Edward Dimock and Ronald Inden,³² and with the Vijayanagar Empire of South India as described by Burton Stein.³³ The Bengal and Vijayanagar similarities are particularly striking since they are drawn from quite different cultural areas. Dimock and Inden, investigating Bengali poetry for clues to the style of urban life in the early eighteenth century, write,

The ideal unit of Bengali society is considered to be the local chiefdom with its capital; and the highest social ideal that a man can attain is to become the raja and master of his own local chiefdom and to live at the pinnacle of the complex urban life which goes on in the chiefdom's capital town. This does not mean that the social horizons are narrow, for in a very real sense,

³⁰ Howard Spodek, 'Urban-Rural Balance in Regional Development: A Case Study of Saurashtra, India, 1800-1960' (Chicago: unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1972).

³¹ See Cohn, *op. cit.*; Fox, *Kin, Clan, Raja, and Rule*; and Fox, 'Rajput "Clans" and Rurban Settlements in Northern India.'

³² Edward C. Dimock, Jr. and Ronald B. Inden, 'The City in Pre-British Bengal According to the mangala-Kavyas,' in Richard L. Park (ed.), *Urban Bengal* (East Lansing: Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1969), pp. 3-18.

³³ Stein, *op. cit.*, pp. 175-216.

the entire social structure of Bengal is encapsulated in the ideal local chieftdom and its capital.³⁴

Here we have the ideal of the encapsulated city-state, though the relationships among urban élites are ostensibly more cordial than those of Saurashtra.

Stein's description of the antagonism between local rulers and long-distance traders in the local units of the Vijayanagar Empire is more reminiscent of Saurashtra:

The political requirement of breaking the military capacity of the older merchant associations contributed to the decline of these older merchant associations after the fourteenth century. . . .³⁵

Elsewhere Stein has suggested that the opposition between groups dependent upon agriculture and those traders and artisans who had greater mobility and independence from the agrarian system appeared frequently in Indian history.³⁶

Within the Vijayanagar Empire, Stein also found militant antagonism between local, neighboring political sub-units:

The persistent tactic of warrior overlordship was to seize maximum control over the productive capacities of tracts which they could hold militarily. This resulted in violent competitiveness.³⁷

Urban centers seemed to lie at the core of each of these sub-regions.³⁸

These examples are drawn from fourteenth through sixteenth-century south India, seventeenth and eighteenth-century Bengal, eighteenth-century north India, and eighteenth through twentieth-century Saurashtra. Their diversity suggests that the local encapsulated regions, with urban capitals at their political center, were crucial geopolitical units throughout Indian history. The model of warrior-rulers striving to dominate their local kingdoms, jealously quarreling with their neighbors, and struggling with competitive internal power blocs, applies to a wide diversity of Indian regions across a wide span of time. It fits Saurashtra up to Independence. In areas which the British ruled directly, the jurisdictional powers of princes were terminated and different groups of local people rose in importance; but the theme remained the same. The tension between local leaders who preferred

³⁴ Dimock and Inden, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³⁵ Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

³⁶ Burton Stein, 'The Segmentary State in Indian History.' Paper delivered at the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, New York City, December 1971.

³⁷ Stein, in *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, p. 207.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

circumscribed local arenas as the basic units of political and economic activity, and those who wished wider units, is central in modern Indian history. Anil Seal, for example, has pointed it out on an all-India scale.³⁹ C. A. Bayly's recent study of Allahabad has brought the struggle into focus in a single urban arena where a rising class of lawyers and journalists with wide geographical connexions successfully contested the supremacy of locally-based *raises*.⁴⁰

The town has already proved a fruitful locus for the study of the vertical political integration of Indian society. Such study has, however, emphasized the town as a center for landed power within the framework of a larger agrarian system of government. It has often begged the question of identifying the town's role in economic integration.⁴¹ The time has now come to study the town as a mechanism also for horizontal integration—or fragmentation; and to study the political interactions of the various groups, landed as well as non-landed, living in the capitals. Models for such enquiry include Henri Pirenne's landmark socio-political researches into the urban system of Western Europe,⁴² and Lloyd Warner's study of the integration of a local community on the eastern seaboard of the United States into the orbit of metropolitan New York.⁴³ Such studies have provided some of our most valuable tools for grasping the historical development and regional patterning of Western civilization. There is every reason to believe that research employing both the integrational and the socio-political models simultaneously will produce striking results in Indian historiography.

³⁹ Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

⁴⁰ C. A. Bayly, 'Local Control in Indian Towns—the Case of Allahabad, 1880–1920,' *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. V, No. 4 (October 1971), pp. 289–311.

⁴¹ Cohn recognizes the necessity for the attempt to analyze economic integration but lacks the data. Cohn, *op. cit.*

⁴² Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

⁴³ W. Lloyd Warner, *et. al.*, *Yankee City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963). See also Maurice Stein, *The Eclipse of Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); and Arthur Vidich and J. Bensman, *Small Town in Mass Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).